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RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 3654
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 4924
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 0679
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0223
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 RABAT 000150

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STATE FOR S/CT AND NEA/MAG

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [FAIR](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [OVIP](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b), (c) and (d).

11. (S/NF) Summary: S/CT Amb. Dell Dailey and NEA DAS Gray visited Morocco February 7-8 to discuss enhancing security cooperation and especially countering the flow of Moroccan foreign fighters into Iraq. Amb. Dailey asked the highest level of concerned GOM officials to assert pressure on Syria to take further steps to halt the transit of foreign fighters, to share passenger data for international flights originating in Morocco, and to enhance bilateral security coordination. The Moroccans were sympathetic to the requests and promised to study the request for increased passenger data. Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri noted that Syria already required visas for Moroccans and other Arabs. During a briefing for Amb. Dailey, Morocco's external intelligence service warned of a possible deterioration of security conditions in Mauritania. End summary.

12. (S) On February 7, S/CT Coordinator Dell Dailey and NEA DAS Gordon Gray began their full schedule of briefings with Minister of Interior Chakib Benmoussa and senior officials from his Ministry. The Ambassador, DCM and Counselor for Regional Affairs also participated. As Ambassador Dailey did in each of his briefings, he explained that devastating suicide attacks by foreign fighters were the biggest killer in Iraq. Praising Morocco's positive steps and very good cooperation on counterterrorism, he said he hoped the cooperation could increase.

13. (S) Ambassador Dailey explained what we had learned from documents seized on September 13, 2007, debriefings and liaison partners about some 800 foreign fighters in Iraq. He noted that 40 percent of the 800 hailed from the Arabian Peninsula and, surprisingly, another 40 percent hailed from North Africa, with Libya accounting for 22 percent. Ambassador Dailey explained that in general the foreign fighters traveled to Syria by air and then entered Iraq on foot after linking up with a facilitator in Damascus and spending 1 to 3 weeks in Syria. Ambassador Dailey then cited

successes using a passenger name recognition (PNR) program in the Caribbean.

How Morocco Can Help

14. (S) Acknowledging that Syria has taken some steps to stem the flow, Ambassador Dailey made three requests of the GOM: 1) that the GOM pressure Syria to strengthen visa requirements, 2) that the GOM and the USG exchange airline passenger lists for all flights and not just for those bound for the United States, and 3) that we look at ways to reinforce U.S.-Moroccan cooperation.

15. (C) Minister Benmoussa responded that Morocco's analysis of the facts was similar. He said Morocco was cognizant of the networks moving foreign fighters to Iraq, Algeria and the Sahel. He acknowledged that these terrorists represent a serious threat to Morocco and, therefore, Morocco is actively working with the U.S. and other partners to control the networks. Minister Benmoussa pointed out that the GOM has dismantled some networks and that approximately 60 Moroccans had been arrested before they could depart Morocco. Another 70 Moroccans are being watched and/or sought in the country and the region. He noted that Moroccans also use routes to and through Algeria and the Sahel. He concluded that we could have an "experts meeting" to examine our already elevated cooperation and the PNR program in particular. (Note: Morocco already provides exhaustive data on passengers traveling on U.S. bound flights. End note.)

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Moroccan Intelligence Chief

16. (S/NF) In a smaller meeting with Mohamed Yassine Mansouri, Chief of the Directorate-General for Studies and Documentaton, Morocco's external intelligence service, General Dailey gave a summary of his presentation on foreign fighters. Mansouri responded that Morocco was not surprised by the number of Libyans but was surprised by the number of its own nationals in the foreign fighter pipeline, particularly of Moroccans from Casablanca. Mansouri assured Ambassador Dailey that he agreed on the three requests. He said cooperation among countries of origin is critical, adding that Morocco believes Syria is now willing to strengthen cooperation. (Note: Separately, Mansouri's deputy, Brigadier General Abdeljabbar Azzaoui, told us that Morocco's leverage over Syria was limited. End note.) Mansouri stated that Morocco hopes that the improving situation in Iraq will diminish the flow of foreign fighters.

17. (S/NF) Mansouri cautioned, however, that Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is a new regional reality and that if AQ fails in Iraq, the Maghreb will become its principal target. Already, terrorist methods in Algeria mirror methods used in Iraq, and Morocco has reason to believe that AQIM has successfully used rockets in Algeria for the first time. Mansouri underscored that Maghreb countries are just beginning to cooperate. He noted that he had just accompanied Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Taieb Fassi Fihri to Mauritania, which has the will but not the means to combat terrorism. Mansouri said no Maghreb country, with the possible exception of Morocco, can begin to control its frontiers.

18. (S/NF) Turning to Western Sahara, Mansouri said the terrorist threat there is real. He was very careful to say that the GOM does not think the POLISARIO is a terrorist organization, but some members of the POLISARIO have joined AQIM. Morocco is particularly concerned that should Algeria and the POLISARIO install themselves outside the berm in the

no man's land in Western Sahara, this could become a base for terrorist training and operations, which Morocco could not tolerate.

¶9. (S/NF) Immediately prior to the meeting with DG Mansouri, DGED experts, led by Azzaoui, Morocco's most senior intelligence officer, gave Amb. Dailey and accompanying delegation an overview briefing of the terror threat across the Maghreb region, including an assessment of the command structure of Algeria-based AQIM, the successor to the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) which has waged a brutal jihadist insurgency against the GOA since the early 1990s. They briefed in detail on the extensive Moroccan efforts over the past few years to disrupt the Iraq foreign fighter pipeline.

¶10. (S/NF) DGED analysts said they were particularly concerned about the situation in Mauritania and forecasted an increase in Islamist terror activity intended to destabilize the country and ultimately topple the Nouakchott government. Jihadists in Mauritania would seek in step up attacks on Mauritanian security forces, senior government officials, and foreign interests, they warned.

¶11. (S/NF) During the final session with the DGED, their analysts noted that 139 Moroccan foreign fighters had attempted to go to Iraq since 2003. The DGED had seen a resurgence in the foreign fighter pipeline in 2006. Their analysis showed that 65 percent of Moroccan foreign fighters

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hailed from Casablanca, 19 percent from Tetouan, 11.5 percent from Tangier, and 4 percent from Taroudant. They confirmed that 40 Moroccans had definitely reached Iraq, and 38 of them had participated in suicide missions. The DGED also emphasized that Moroccan cells cooperated with individuals and cells in Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri

¶12. (C) Dailey and Gray accompanied by Ambassador also briefed Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi-Fihri February 8. MFA Chief of Staff Bourita and Western Hemisphere Director Tazi sat in. Dailey praised the reforms undertaken by King Mohammed VI and said they gave people hope. He asked the Minister to request that Syria tighten entry controls and apply particularly close scrutiny to young travelers. He also urged Morocco to take advantage of USG capabilities to screen passenger manifests for flights to Turkey and Syria, as is already being done for flights to the U.S.

¶13. (C) Fassi Fihri appreciated the briefing, recalling meeting Fran Townsend at the NSC, who told him Morocco's CT cooperation with the USG was the best in the Arab world. He noted that the GOM was interested in the distinction whether Moroccans went specifically to blow themselves up, or simply to fight and perhaps get training. There was no overall headquarters organizing this in Morocco, but he had heard there was a Moroccan in Iraq with al-Qaeda doing organizing. He insisted that Syria already requires visas from Moroccans and other Arab entrants. He undertook to communicate concerns to the Governments of Turkey and Syria. Most transit was through Europe, however.

¶14. (C) In the Maghreb, he assessed cooperation with Tunisia had improved in the last month. At the behest of friendly governments, Morocco was cooperating with Libya. The Algerians cooperate, but at a minimal level. More confidence could lead to improved cooperation. He had recently returned from Mauritania, where the President was very concerned about the situation. The Mauritaniens told him Islamists from there don't go to Iraq, but stay in Mauritania to cause trouble. He understood that terrorists were searching for specifically French citizens to kidnap -- they let Italians

go. Regionally, the AMU can be a source of cooperation. In the aftermath of their meetings with the Europeans (5 5, EU) the ministers agreed that the next meeting would discuss security cooperation.

¶15. (C) TFF noted the young man who targeted the Consulate in Casablanca had been intending to go to Iraq, but his leader had been arrested and he acted in desperation. He lamented that potential extremists pay too much attention to al-Jazeera.

¶16. (C) Ambassador Dailey and DAS Gray have cleared this message.

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Riley